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## HISTORY



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## The Tale of Two Gardens

It is a wonderful achievement that Australia's first historic site to be listed in the World Heritage List includes one of our best-loved gardens – Carlton Gardens. And it is also a great credit to its managers, Melbourne City Council, that their loving care of this heritage treasure has been recognised. Now Carlton Gardens can serve as a model to oppose destructive development of other period gardens.

The 'Viewpoint' by Peter and Kate Cox in *Australian Garden History* Vol. 16, No. 1, July/August 2004 highlights the all too common misunderstanding of garden heritage conservation. Canberra, over recent years, has been a battleground for these issues and the ACT Branch of the AGHS has been expending considerable energy trying to influence officialdom that seems intent on demolishing Canberra's heritage garden treasures. Although Old Parliament House Gardens might not have been well known to Peter Cox, they have been quite well known to Canberrans and, at the AGHS 1997 National Conference, they were recommended as a feature of the Parliamentary Triangle to visit. The gardens are also briefly mentioned in the *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* 2002, they are in the Register of the National Estate, and their heritage values are detailed in the recently

created Commonwealth Heritage List. It remains to be seen if any of the heritage values will remain after the redevelopment of the gardens.

The gardens were private modest recreational gardens for Parliamentarians containing sporting facilities and rose gardens. The roses that were present in the garden up until the recent works have had an evolving history. The first batch of plantings was in the 1930s and a second large-scale planting was made in the 1950s prior to the visit by Queen Elizabeth II. However there were continual donations of rose plants by members of the public and by the wives of parliamentarians over the years. Such donations were still being made to the gardens when Max Bourke was managing Old Parliament House 1995-96. Some of these roses in the garden at the time of the recent redevelopment were known to be commercially extinct and for many of us, old gnarled stems provide time-depth character to heritage gardens – not a reason for plant removal. As a heritage feature, the gardens were private outdoor rooms, extensions of Old Parliament House.

When Peter Cox visited the gardens and gave advice on the roses, the gardens were indeed run down as they had been left in a state of minimal management since Parliament House moved to its present location. A magnificent

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Carlton Gardens



major tree, recorded by a student in a measured drawing exercise, died during this time and a historic shade house fell into disrepair and was removed. The 'diseased' condition of the roses appears to have been promoted as a reason for removing the roses and implementing the brave new garden redevelopment. However, a contract gardener employed during 2002-2003 revived the old roses with careful pruning and nurturing, and alerted the AGHS to their true value and condition. When members of the ACT Branch of the AGHS visited the gardens in 2003, the roses, displaying their colour co-ordinated planting patterns, were in full bloom and appeared to be in magnificent condition.

The redeveloped Old Parliament House Gardens (not yet completed) are planned to be used for functions with the installation of new hard surface areas, kitchen kiosks, an array of large pergolas, substantial tennis pavilion buildings, colonnades, fountains, tennis court lights, new rose plantings of hundreds of new small hybrid tea varieties, and to keep it all safe – a new external metal fence with massive concrete gate posts to the now eight, gated garden entries, albeit in an olde-Parliament House style.

Carlton Gardens on the other hand, although absorbing some changes and refinements, and losing most of the northern area, have retained their essential heritage character as a late 19th Century garden setting for the Royal Exhibition Building. Any proposal to change the character and function, and install an array of new features

## *Viewpoint cont.*

in Carlton Gardens, as has been done to Old Parliament House Gardens, would surely be regarded by Melbournians with horror. Had Carlton Gardens been modified to the same extent as Old Parliament House Gardens, it is doubtful if they would have been eligible for a World Heritage nomination.

With all the money that has been spent on them, the redeveloped Old Parliament House Gardens will look attractive and have many admirers, but let us not forget the AGHS mission stated in each journal:

The Australian Garden History Society is the leader in concern for and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action.

No one is advocating that all old gardens are preserved but those that are heritage listed deserve sound conservation management. Old Parliament House Gardens were an integral component of a distinct period precinct of Australia's early 20th century government, comprising Old Parliament House, the two Secretariats, Old Parliament House Gardens and the National Rose Gardens. Their important contribution to that precinct's heritage value and their ability to convey the historic story of the precinct has now been seriously damaged. As well, their new image with its array of structures, visible above the hedge, impacts on the period character of the vistas of Old Parliament House.

The current battle in Central Canberra is to retain the heritage listed York Park North Plantation, a small oak plantation that is currently proposed for office redevelopment.

*Juliet Ramsay is a member of the ACT/Monaro/Riverina Branch of the AGHS and is the Australian ICOMOS nominee to the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee for Historic Gardens and Cultural Landscapes.*

# A Rampart Garden

## Reinstating the western terrace at Government House, Sydney

BY SCOTT CARLIN

The arrival of plans for the new Government House<sup>1</sup>, Sydney, in late 1834 or early 1835, led to consternation over its budget and renewed debate about its siting.

### Selecting a new site

Sydney's first Government House, built by Governor Arthur Phillip in 1788 and enlarged by successive governors, faced out to Sydney Cove. The town of Sydney stopped at its gates while its domain extended to Woolloomooloo Bay. Governor and Mrs Macquarie laid out a carriage drive<sup>2</sup> and ornamented the landscape with structures designed in a Picturesque Gothic style by Francis Greenway: the stables (now the Conservatorium of Music) and Fort Macquarie on Bennelong Point, both built between 1817 and 1821. Governor and Mrs Darling built a Gothic bathing house on the shores of Farm Cove in 1826. This association between Gothic Revival architecture and the Picturesque qualities of the Sydney Harbour foreshores influenced the choice of the style for Sydney's new Government House, prepared in London during the early 1830s by country house architect, Edward Blore.

A select committee was convened in July and August 1836 and it considered three sites for the new house on a ridge immediately to the east of the first Government House. The committee took evidence from the Colonial Engineer, Captain George Barney of the Royal Engineers and from the Colonial Architect, Mortimer Lewis. The first site, south of the stables, had a commanding position above the town of Sydney. Its distant vista to Greenway's lighthouse at South Head strongly suggests that it had been the Macquaries' favoured site for a new Government House. A second location, at the eastern terminus of an extended Bridge Street, directly in front of Greenway's stables, was proposed by Sir Thomas Mitchell in 1832. While the stables may have been partly refitted to compensate for the lack of service accommodation in Blore's plans, their greater bulk may have dwarfed the new Government House.

A third site, proposed by Barney and approved by the committee, was equidistant between the stables and Fort Macquarie, within the curve of Mrs Macquarie's Road and dominated by some large rock outcrops. In contrast with previous schemes it offered Government



Plan of the Inner Domain, Sydney, Sydney 1845 'Tracing from a Plan forwarded to the Governor by Mr Townsend, January 1845'. This plan shows the form of the western terrace and its axial arrangement of paths well established in 1845, the year of completion of Government House, Sydney.

State Records NSW





Above: 'Walk' Government House Grounds Sydney, 1870

This view shows the broad lower eastern terrace path crossed by the stairs leading to the Chalet. The covered way was built over them in 1890-91. Two of the original stone vases survived beneath the covered way.

NSW Government Printer, Government House Collection



Middle: Lower western terrace path c.1870-80

This view shows the broad lower eastern terrace path bordered by stone vases and the sundial. It also shows a 'crisp' and labour intensive style of mid 19th century gardening, including a shaped embankment, ribbon grass borders and specimen trees set into lawn.

Small Picture File, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

Right: Lower western terrace path c.1890

Small Picture File, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW



House the privacy of a gentleman's estate. Mortimer Lewis reversed Blore's plans to give the staterooms vistas across a generous grassed forecourt to Bradley's Head. The house, instead of facing the town (from which it would have been highly visible), provided 'an imposing aspect from the harbour' being on the main shipping route<sup>3</sup>. An embankment was formed on the western side of the house by constructing stone walls around the rock outcrops and knolls. Fill and rubble from the construction of the house were added to create a terrace on two levels. The resulting 'rampart garden' contributed to the romantic Gothic mood of the turreted and crenellated house.

The terrace provided the house, and particularly the offices of the Governor and his staff, on its western flank, greater seclusion from the town. This had become a priority as Governor Bourke had sought to remedy the inadequate budget for the new Government House by the sale of part of the Government Domain. The re-forming of Sydney Cove as a semi-circular quay had been proposed and Barney, as Colonial Engineer, was required to carry Bourke's plan through the committees overseeing the individual projects. Macquarie Street was continued north of Bent Street to allow the opening of the newly formed East Circular Quay to commercial development. Macquarie Street itself was to be the site of government offices. West of Macquarie Street, Phillip, Elizabeth, Castlereagh and Pitt Streets were extended and the blocks facing them sold. The construction of the rampart may have reflected anxiety over the increased proximity of Government House to commercial activity.

## The garden plans

A plan of the Inner Domain, Sydney, captioned 'Tracing from a Plan forwarded to the Governor by Mr Townsend, January 1845' shows the western terrace and its axial arrangement of paths well established at the time of Government House's completion. The broad

central path terminated at a rondel or circular garden bed at the southern end. A perimeter path (also broad enough to allow two people to walk abreast) provided a view of the town from the rampart. On the western side a decorative post and wire fence (the cast iron posts topped with orbs) provided protection against the sharp drop. On the eastern side the stones of the upper course of the retaining wall were cut to ensure maximum stability for the steep grass embankment. From the mid 1840s ornamental stone vases lined the eastern paths. Their regimentation suggests the hand of the Royal Engineers in the layout of the garden. The terrace was reached by stairs leading from the Government House 'private' or western entrance, suggesting that it was very much the preserve of the Governor, his advisors and family.

Blackwood's Panorama of Sydney & Harbour of 1858 shows the western terrace densely planted with specimen trees – Norfolk Island pines (*Araucaria heterophylla*), stone pines (*Pinus pinea*), forest red gum (*Eucalyptus tereticornis*), Sydney species such as the blueberry ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*) and cheese tree (*Glochidion ferdinandi*) and Australian rain forest trees, such as the black bean (*Castanospermum australe*), lilly pillly (*Syzygium luehmannii*) and Moreton Bay fig (*Ficus macrophylla*). The planting of the western terrace was undoubtedly influenced by the fashion for private arboreta, advocated by British garden writers such as John Claudius Loudon. Richard Aitken and Colleen Morris have identified a similar layout in the Derby Arboretum, illustrated in the *Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal* (1841)<sup>4</sup>, a publication available in the colony. Government House was thus silhouetted against a dense verdant backdrop, an effect praised by Thomas Shepherd<sup>5</sup> in his description of Elizabeth Bay House.

The Chalet was built at the northern end of the western terrace in 1890-91. It was designed by





the New South Wales Government Architect, Walter Liberty Vernon, in the spirit of the 'Queen Anne' or English Vernacular Revival. The Chalet's vernacular materials and construction – board and batten, shingles and terracotta tiles – contrasted with the more formal stone and slate of Government House. Illustrations reproduced in the *Australasian Builders and Contractors News* in May 1891 draw attention to the complementary nature of the two buildings. In the context of the Government House grounds the Chalet is perhaps a late example of the *cottage ornée*, an architectural fashion of the late 18th to mid-19th centuries for small houses designed in a picturesque style for garden settings.

While the Chalet was positioned within the existing 1840s path layout, there were modifications to the paths and garden beds on its southern side to introduce a balanced asymmetry, reflecting an aspect of the design of the Chalet itself. The covered way was built over the path leading out from the western entrance in 1890-91. Its detailing followed that of the Chalet's verandas. Two of the 1840s stone vases survived beneath the covered way.

### Charles Weston's contribution

In 1901 the State of New South Wales offered Government House, Sydney, to the Commonwealth of Australia as a residence for the Governor-General. With the Governor-General largely absent in the ensuing years a number of changes were made to the Government House grounds by Charles Weston, who was appointed head gardener in 1908. Most significant was the reduction of the number of mature trees, particularly Moreton Bay figs, which Weston denounced as 'robber trees'. The western terrace appears to have been extensively cleared in 1910<sup>6</sup>. This may have been accompanied by a removal of paths and edgings in favour of 'softer' landscaping.



The Governor of New South Wales returned to Government House in 1915 and the Chalet became the residence of the Official Secretary. The grounds of Government House were reduced in scale in 1915, with the western boundary moving to its current location beyond the service road. The planting of olive hedges, particularly above the western rampart wall, reflected a desire for greater privacy. From the 1970s to the 1990s a rose garden was located at the southern end of the western terrace.

### The western terrace garden reappears

The reinstatement of the western terrace garden was proposed in Barry McGregor & Associates, *Government House, Sydney Conservation and Management Plan* (1997) and the proposal was further developed in Richard Aitken & Colleen Morris, *Government House, Sydney Master Plan for Garden & Grounds* (1999). An 1892 survey (1939 edition) provided the basis for Department of Commerce drawings for the reinstatement.

The reinstatement is the result of collaboration between the Historic Houses Trust, the Department of Commerce and the Royal Botanic Gardens.

Members of the Australian Garden History Society will be able to see the reinstated rampart garden during the AGHS National Conference in October.

*Scott Carlin has been a curator with the Historic Houses Trust since 1990 and has taken a keen interest in the cultural landscapes associated with his major posts – Rouse Hill, Elizabeth Bay House and Government House.*

Left: The Chalet, 1901

This view shows slight modifications to the northern end of the western terrace which followed on from the construction of the Chalet and covered way in 1890-91. The paths and garden beds adjacent to the Chalet have been laid out according to the balanced asymmetry of the Chalet itself. This view provides evidence for the Chalet's original colour scheme, confirmed by scrape tests. The Chalet will be repainted in the two-tone scheme in 2004.

*Beouchomp Collection, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW*

Right: The Chalet from the south-west c.1910-1919

*Government Printing Office Collection, State Library of NSW*

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Now commemorated by the Museum of Sydney on the corner of Bridge and Phillip Streets, Sydney

<sup>2</sup> The inscription on the rockface above Mrs Macquarie's chair celebrates the completion of the drive in 1817

<sup>3</sup> The siting for the house is discussed in Barry McGregor and Associates, *Government House, Sydney, Conservation & Management Plan*, 1997, pp. 9-10, 32-41, 54-56

<sup>4</sup> Richard Aitken and Colleen Morris, *Government House, Sydney, Master Plan for Garden and Grounds* (Historic Houses Trust of NSW, 1999) p. 64

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Shepherd, *Lectures in Landscape Gardening*, published Sydney, 1836, p. 89

<sup>6</sup> Aitken and Morris, *op cit.*, p. 41



1920s Folly Farm site  
pre-Walling

# Genesis of a Historic Garden

## Part 1 – Edna Walling at Folly Farm

BY VOLKHARD WEHNER

**F**olly Farm, a property of slightly over 3.6 hectares, is situated on a ridge on the eastern edge of the mountain village Olinda, facing north towards Mount Dandenong (633m).

The evolution of Folly Farm is well documented, thanks to three significant factors. Firstly, the same family owned the property continuously for 86 years, secondly, the owners, their friends and visitors were educated and literate people given to committing their recollections to paper and thirdly, aided by the fact that Australia is a peaceful country and houses have not been burned deliberately or pillaged as they have been elsewhere, records documenting the management and history of the property have survived.

### A weekender in the Dandenongs

The beginnings of Folly Farm were modest indeed, commencing in early 1912 with a half acre (0.2 hectare) block covered by the trunks of 17 enormous, predominantly dead, mountain ash trees. In the process of clearing the block one of these giants fell the wrong way, covering the property so devastatingly that the vendor, the distinguished crochet designer Mary Card, agreed to swap the block for a neighbouring one. Mary did this to please the new owner, her friend and neighbour, Isabella Cox.

As soon as the new block had been cleared and a site prepared, construction of a small two-roomed wooden cottage with a lean-to kitchen and a wrap-around verandah began. By Christmas it was ready for Isabella's family and friends. In the course of the following eight years Isabella and her family – her husband, the Reverend Edward Cox, Methodist minister at Moonee Ponds, their son Leonard, and their two daughters, Leila and Una – used the cottage as a weekender. Isabella also supplemented her husband's meagre stipend

by letting the cottage during holiday periods to her friends and acquaintances and to Leonard's friends at medical school and their families.

After serving with the Australian Medical Corps of the AIF in France and Britain from early 1917 until his demobilization late in 1919, Captain Leonard Cox returned from England gravely ill with tuberculosis contracted in the trenches. His family moved him to the cottage at Olinda where he stayed from mid-1920 to 1921. During his long slow recovery Isabella, to his great surprise, made the title of the property over to him.

A handwritten diary in Leonard's hand from 1913 indicates what can only be described as an aversion to the rough and still very wild mountain village but, with his gradual recovery, Leonard Cox's attitude to Olinda was changing. He spent time pottering around the few garden beds that Isabella, now 70 years old and less inclined to visit Olinda, had established in the simple garden.

During the 1920s Cox focused on establishing himself as a physician and building up his city practice. This and his pioneering research in the new field of neurology largely kept him away from Olinda, but by the mid 1930s his family and financial position at last allowed him to give attention once more to the property, now fairly overgrown.

Disastrous bushfires in 1926 had caused considerable damage to the garden and several outbuildings, persuading Cox to construct stone walls around the base of the cottage, enhancing its appearance and reducing the risk of sub-floor fires. This project was accomplished in 1933 with the assistance of local labourers. Materials were a combination of imported and local rock. Of the latter the property supplied ample quantities. The Dandenongs are of volcanic origin and numerous



'floaters'<sup>1</sup>, submerged or partly submerged rocks of various sizes, could be found almost as soon as a spade was sunk into the ground. Extremely hard (rhyodacite), they usually have rounded edges and their shape eminently qualifies them for use in the construction of dry rock walls and the edges of paths.

## Extensions and stone walls

In 1936, the year his only surviving child, Barbara, was born, Leonard Cox purchased a two acre (one hectare) paddock on the northern boundary. Later referred to as *the lower garden*, in contradistinction to *the cottage garden* surrounding the house, this area was rough, covered with bracken, blackberries and small stands of regrowth black wattle and blackwood trees.

A year later another parcel of land on the eastern boundary was purchased. This block was one of the surviving original ten acre (four hectare) 'village settlement' blocks of the disastrous carve-up of the Dandenong State Forest in the early 1890s. With the exception of approximately one hectare later sold, this block now forms an integral part of Folly Farm and is today referred to as *the paddock*. It provided an endless supply of 'floaters' for building rock walls around, as well as within, the property. Still not formally named, but loosely referred to as *Kooyong* and later just *Olinda*, the property had suddenly grown from 0.2 hectares to 5.2 hectares.

Cox was literally 'carried away' by the availability of stones for construction. He constructed a dry rock wall on the northern boundary of the original 0.2 hectare block. This still exists today, though it was subsequently improved by stone pillars and a gate constructed by Ellis Stones, and it is interesting to observe that the surface profile of the land on which that wall was constructed has significantly changed over the decades. The soil level on the upper (south) side of the wall is now almost 1 metre higher than on the north side – entirely the result of arrested erosion and natural mulching of leaves and other debris trapped by the wall.

Folly Farm today boasts a number of rock walls, built on boundaries as well as forming central garden ornaments. Cox knew how to build



c.1940 showing entry to Walling path beside house

them well and they survive largely intact, often covered with lichen, moss or creepers, but alas, they also harbour wire grass, blackberries, English ivy, hollies and other weeds.

By the early 1930s a pleasing, though rather regular and predictable garden had been established, with flower beds and hardy plants like lavender, rosemary and genista (now considered a noxious weed). Cox had already 'discovered' and planted a number of English and Irish yew trees, which were thriving on the property. Although this tree species in due course became a signature tree of Folly Farm, serving as a focus, especially in the cottage garden, it appears Edna Walling was not specially taken by it. She does not give it prominence in any of her writings and it is not named amongst her favourites listed in Dixon and Churchill's *The Vision of Edna Walling*<sup>2</sup>, nor in Peter Watts's *The Gardens of Edna Walling*<sup>3</sup>. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why these handsome trees seem never to have become popular in the Dandenongs, though another reason may be that the English yew especially looks best when pruned and grown in hedges and Edna would have shied away from plants requiring high maintenance.

So far, Cox had worked largely on his own, assisted by local casual labourers. All his plantings had to be self-sustaining, as no irrigation was possible. In any case, the property was used as a weekender, as it turned out, for another 25 years and the maintenance requirements had to be kept to a minimum.

## Edna Walling's garden design

One of Leonard Cox's medical colleagues and friends at the Alfred Hospital was the ophthalmologist Dr Joseph Ringland Anderson





Leonard Cox c.1940

who, in 1934, had retained the services of garden designer Edna Walling to construct the garden of Churston, his Toorak home. Ringland Anderson's garden was an urban garden of geometric design, displaying a distinct Japanese element very likely due to the influence of Mrs Ringland Anderson and it fitted the site extremely well. The Ringland Andersons' delight was transmitted to Cox when he came to visit.

As a result Cox engaged Walling in 1936 to design the garden immediately surrounding his Olinda cottage. There is no record showing that Cox at that stage was familiar with Walling's village at Bickleigh Vale, Mooroolbark, nor that he was aware of the two gardens created by Edna only a short distance away – The Grove (later Mawarra) at Sherbrooke and Nalparingan at Upwey, both established in 1932.

Edna's approach to her commission – especially at Folly Farm – was to interfere as little as possible with existing plants. Her method was to integrate what she found and add to it, to create a more effective and pleasing design.

The proposal she made to Dr Cox incorporated several large grassed areas of irregular design, stone paths, a rockery, a small pond and clusters of multi-tiered trees and shrubs acting as lead-ins to other features lying beyond. Her

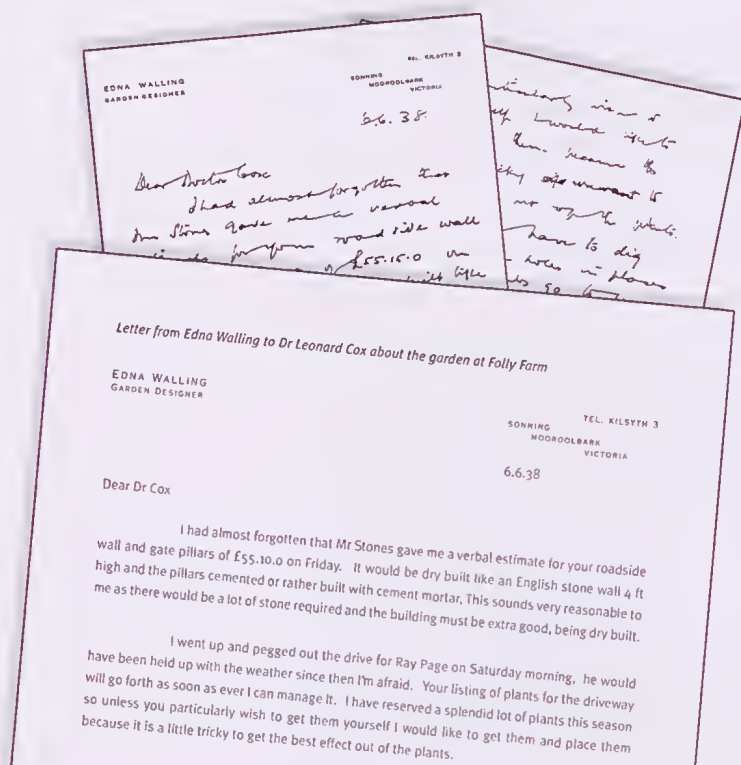
designs frequently included one or several elements of surprise, mystery, romance: a spectacular view, an interesting plant, some stone or rock elements. She eschewed the use of bright flowers or bright colours; rather she aimed at a diversity of textures, of different shades of green resulting from differing plant material and the mottling effect of full or filtered sunlight breaking through layers of foliage.

The south/north slope suited her well, though she may have regretted that the strip of land between the cottage and the southern boundary of the garden was quite narrow. Here a grassy lane (known today as Cards Lane) provided the only access to the property. In that location there was not a great deal of room and little sunlight to finish off the design particularly well. She resolved this problem by planting a row of silver birches, to be held in place by a dry stone wall. Both these features are still in existence. But as the cottage has taken up even more of this narrow strip of land through two subsequent extensions, this part remains one of the weakest aesthetic elements of Folly Farm.

The proposed low-maintenance regime posed no problems and although Walling was at that time strongly committed to an exotic planting program, she found the contrast with the surrounding native bush of tall timber – especially near the southern and western boundaries – to be an interesting and challenging design feature with which to 'connect' the garden. Her planting of (largely) European and North American plants was based on their suitability for the Olinda climate, the annual rainfall (of almost 1500mm), the lack of artificial irrigation and the altitude of the garden, which at an average of 550m attracts the occasional snowfall. Included amongst her planting was her 'trade mark' climbing rose, often referred to as the 'Edna Walling' rose, as well as several other species such as English broom and cotoneaster, which she had already planted widely at Bickleigh Vale but which are today considered undesirable as environmental weeds.

Leonard Cox recalled the day the large consignment of silver birches was planted. It was a hot summer day, with air temperatures in the high thirties. Edna proved that hers were indeed green fingers because not one of her

Documents:  
Walling letter plus text





plants was lost. Cox had been ill on the day of the planting, but Edna insisted that all hands be on deck, including the disabled owner. A committed Christian Scientist, she did not believe in illness; to her it was one of the human foibles best disregarded. Whatever he thought of her bullying, Cox survived the ordeal.

A considerable amount of rockwork was included in the concept plan: several stone steps, flat stones laid flush into the grass to define paths, a rockery dissected by several paths, a dry stone retaining wall and a small rock pool built from cement and local stone, with steps leading down to it, and a large rock from which frogs could launch themselves into the pond, as well as stone pillars for a small gate leading into *the lower garden*. All this was executed under her supervision by Walling's associates, Ellis Stones and Eric Hammond.

Lists of plant material, nursery docket, a meticulous and artistically executed watercolour plan by Walling are extant and document the entire project. Similarly, invoices for rocks, cement and other material also remain. The brief given Edna by Leonard Cox was largely verbal, the result of several discussions they had with one another. As the project got under way Edna would add new ideas as they came to her and she would put them before him for approval. In later years Cox recalled that Walling would not accept any further variations from *him*. In fact an owner was expected to give a detailed but final brief *prior* to commencement, otherwise he had to accept *her* proposal in full.

He found it amazing that she had a detailed and exact image of the completed project in mind well before completion, just as a composer can conceptualise his composition. It is therefore a cause for regret that she did not have the foresight to provide guidelines to her clients, assisting them and their heirs and successors to maintain the properties in keeping with her design. In that way it would have been easier to retain the integrity of those gardens over the following decades. She was capable of doing so, but alas never did. We may wonder whether Edna ever contemplated that her gardens would or could endure beyond the lifetime of the original client<sup>4</sup>.

Cox's recollections showed Edna Walling as a self-assured, knowledgeable and confident



garden architect, prepared to stand and defend her ground. Occasionally almost gruff, owners and assistants generally stood in awe of her. Often wearing leggings and jodpurs, she had a presence which sometimes seemed to overshadow her proverbial kindness and artistic sensibilities.

c.1938 Walling path at entrance to scalloped lawn with artemisia (pre-Walling) retained by EW. The child is Barbara Cox, Leonard Cox's daughter.

When the garden had been completed, Cox was well pleased with the outcome. It is therefore not surprising that after he had acquired the large paddock and reserved a 15m strip of land in the south-western corner for a drive, giving him access to the properly constructed Falls Road, he recalled Walling for a second 'round'.

## Walling's second project

Walling's brief this time was to design and build the driveway and to construct stone pillars for a gate at the southern end. Here a wooden gate was hung, to be replaced later by a succession of wrought iron gates. The project got underway early in 1938, and once again detailed documentation and a delightful watercolour plan remain extant.

Apart from a couple of 12-metre *Pinus radiata* (still standing though significantly more stately today), the strip of land was largely bare. Edna's design, providing for a curving driveway reminiscent of an English country lane (or to Australian eyes perhaps more like a writhing snake) was masterly, especially after the newly planted trees and shrubs had matured and had closed into a canopy overhead, creating a green tunnel and allowing filtered and mottled light to penetrate to the gravelled surface.

Some among her choice of trees showed less foresight: the supplier's docket shows that 36 English hollies were ordered and planted



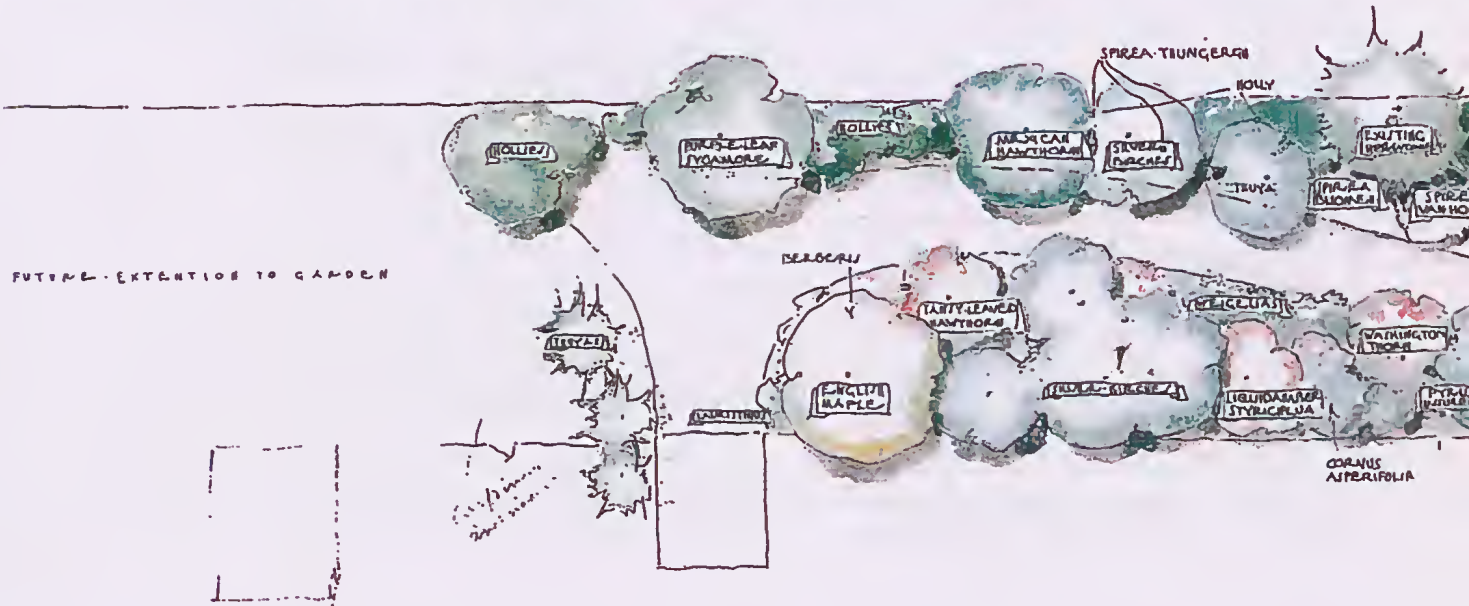
# Genesis of a Historic Garden

From *The Vision of Edna Walling* (1999) used with permission of the authors Trisha Dixon and Jennie Churchill and the publisher Blo

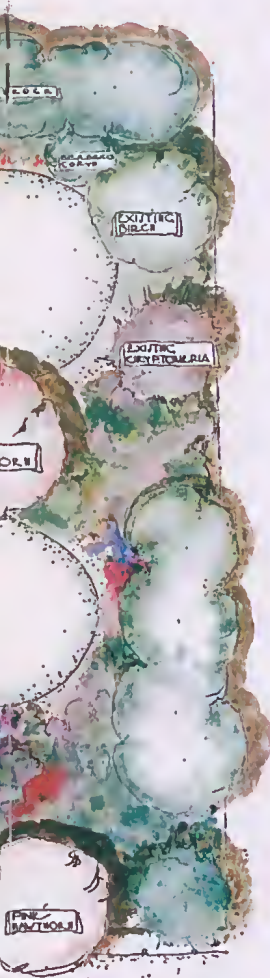
THE GARDEN PLAN FOR DOCTOR LEONARD B COX, OLINDA, VIC



PLAN FOR THE SUGGESTED PLANTING OF ROADWAY FOR DR L. B







3 LOCKSLEY  
- 445-WATERDALE-ROAD, IVANHOE, N. 21 -  
Telephone IVANHOE 880 26' May 1938  
Dr. to E. A. STONES  
BUILDER AND CONTRACTOR  
Supplying Labour and Sawmings  
on Christchurch Rock Garden  
at Olinda.

Far left:  
Edna Walling's Garden Plan  
for Folly Farm

Bottom:  
Edna Walling's Plan for  
Roadway Planting at Folly  
Farm

19 HILL STREET,  
Box Hill, Vic. 3113  
Phone WK 2101  
Dr. to E. H. HAMMOND  
Garden Contractor  
Estimates Given for Everything that Makes the Garden Beautiful  
E. & D.E.  
To Amount Rendered £ 1.7.6

Aug 29 3 yds Pump Rock 3.00  
1 yd 6 in Sods of Sand 1.66  
Churned 1.70  
ag pipes 2.00  
Black Paint 2.6  
Hil & Thicketing of Pump Rock 2.00  
Labour on Road, lifting  
and helping Mr. Walling 6.00  
Sept 3 6 am and trip up  
to assist Mr. Walling  
and lifting s.d. 6.00  
Sept 9 6 am on above 27.9.0  
Paid by cheque  
to Mr. Walling  
16/9/38

Above left:  
Dry stone wall, 1990s

Above:  
Showing scalloped beds  
edging lawn, 1995

Documents:  
Dr to EH Hammond April  
1938 and Dr to Ellis Stones  
May 1938

. COX, OLINDA







Walling path beside house  
c.2000

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The name 'floater' derives from the tendency of these rocks to move or 'float' – either rising above the ground, or disappearing, as the result of erosion by wind, rain, temperature variations, drought, compaction, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Jennie Churchill & Trisha Dixon, *The Vision of Edno Walling*, Blooming Books 1998 p.139.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Watts, *The Gardens of Edno Walling*, National Trust of Australia (Vic) Melbourne 1981

<sup>4</sup> Richard Bisgrove, *The Gardens of Gertrude Jekyll*, Frances Lincoln 1992 for a discussion of survival of Jekyll gardens.

<sup>5</sup> Jennie Churchill & Trisha Dixon, op.cit. p. 139

<sup>6</sup> A. Fowler, *Folly Farm – General and Specific Recommendations* pp.21-22

<sup>7</sup> 'The Rockery' in Peter Watts, *The Gardens of Edno Walling* p.51(top)

<sup>8</sup> Peter Watts, *Historic Gardens of Victoria*, 1983 p.158

<sup>9</sup> Referred to in M. Barrett ed., *The Garden Magic of Edno Walling*, Anne O'Donovan Vic 1988

on either side. At that time hollies were still on the popular wish-list – including Edna's own<sup>5</sup> – while today they are considered to be one of the worst environmental intruders on account of their rapid spread by fruit-eating birds. Should Edna have foreseen this problem? Could she have anticipated the unprecedented proliferation of berry-eating native (currawong and rosella) and introduced birds (starling, blackbird, mynah), lured to the Dandenongs by the ever-increasing human settlement, as well as by frequent drought periods in the lower altitudes?

Today the driveway retains much of the charm intended by its designer, and in principle, is considered one of Edna's finest surviving creations. However, in contrast to the cottage garden, senescence and loss of many of the original plantings, the 'holly problem', as well as the intrusion caused by buildings and other human activities close by, pose interesting challenges. A possible rescue plan was proposed in a thesis put forward by landscape architect Anne Fowler<sup>6</sup>.

The angled stone gate pillars, constructed by Ellis Stones, flanked by low stone walls continuing to the property boundaries on either side, have withstood the ravages of time and the hills climate well.

Edna must have been pleased with the results of both projects. Evidence of this is her use of at least one photograph depicting Folly Farm in one of her books. The photograph was taken by Leonard Cox, though no identification or acknowledgement is made<sup>7</sup>. But perhaps more importantly, Peter Watts notes that a property created by Edna soon after Folly Farm – Wooleen, at Benalla (1938) – bears many of the 'wild garden' characteristics of Folly Farm, contrasting starkly with her earlier Dandenongs garden, Mawarra (1932), and another, even earlier Benalla garden, Yathong (1928). In Peter Watts's words the latter two gardens share far more common characteristics 'with the sophisticated hill station gardens of Mount Macedon.'<sup>8</sup> From this one may conclude that Folly Farm is positioned towards the end of Walling's formal, more 'English' phase, and that it is indeed fairly close to her more informal Australian phase.

As she was a tireless and prolific publicist and writer as well as a garden educator, it is likely that she would also have approved of Leonard Cox's follow-up activities to her original design. Whether she ever returned, to inspect or critique, is not known. She undertook several other commissions in the Dandenongs, including one at Olinda for Miss Hughes-Jones (1939), for the Misses Glanville at Sassafras (c. 1940), as well as helping her friends, the Martins, at Arden Wood, in the late 1940s<sup>9</sup>. Indeed she is known to have worked in the Dandenongs as late as the 1960s.

However, the disastrous fire at Bickleigh Vale and the need to rebuild Sonning, her home, the beginning of another war, as well as heavy commitments on new projects, might have kept her away. Leonard Cox's daughter Barbara Wehner suspects that, while Edna greatly respected Leonard Cox, these two totally different individuals did not bond. They failed to establish close rapport with one another. That seems to be confirmed by the fact that Cox's collection of photographs does not include any which show Edna and her team working at Folly Farm. A keen amateur photographer, Cox must have had his reasons.

Leonard Cox was well aware that after Edna's departure there was still a great deal to be done to complete the design of Folly Farm. Soon after she had gone he commenced with his own extensions of Walling's work and he followed principles which he felt were in sympathy with his understanding of her ideas.

*Volkhard Wehner is Leonard Cox's son-in-law who with his wife Barbara and family lived permanently at Folly Farm from 1978 until 1987. Thereafter the house reverted to weekend use until the property was sold to new owners in 1998. He has researched and written on various aspects of the history of the Dandenongs.*

Part 2: 'After Edna Walling at Folly Farm' will appear in the next issue of *Australian Garden History*.

## Acknowledgement

Photographs, plans and documents supplied by Volkhard Wehner.



# Illusions of Grandeur

## Flora and Ceremony at the Melbourne Town Hall

BY JELA IVANKOVIC-WATERS

*All photographs reproduced from original images held in the City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection.*

The recent exhibition, *Illusions of Grandeur*, presented by the City of Melbourne and based on its Art and Heritage Collection, revealed the value of horticulture in the City's ceremonial life. Extravagant floral displays within the Town Hall were composed specially for the annual Lord Mayor's Ball, the Lord Mayor's Dinner, and other important civic events. Sweeping garlands and layers of flowers and foliage were arranged in front of imposing painted scenic murals, which the three-dimensional element of flora served to embellish. By virtue of their scale and function, the painted scenic backdrops and garden foregrounds served as a point of illusion and exaggeration – to elevate extravagant ideas.

### The tradition

The settings reflected a dazzling ephemeral visual art tradition popular in Melbourne's formal municipal affairs from the 19th century until 1980. During the years between and shortly after the two world wars, Melbourne sought to pitch itself in grand style. The Centenary, the Coronation, the Olympic Games: the cultural aspirations of young Melbourne Town were unabashedly put on show for the city's privileged.

The use of background montage and foreground floral displays alludes to a *tableaux vivants* convention where the intention was to mimic a recognisable image through the use of 'live' objects such as people, plants, and running water. Classical and imperial icons were mixed with local figures to create an effect that would be burlesque for the spectator of today. Whether the scenes were derived from allegorical, mythological or historical subjects – Windsor Castle or Parthenon – they celebrated a European heritage. The appearance of these European cultural symbols together with the local 'performers'

frozen within the same scene was arresting. Stereotypical Australian representations were also used: a bearded Aboriginal figure, boomerang-shaped stage configurations, Melbourne's skyline, and even Flinders Street Railway Station. The identification of Australian and European symbols was essential in celebrating the dignity and splendour of the occasion. The civic ceremony presented the ideal platform for nationalist sentiment, as well as exuberant expressions of loyalty to Great Britain.

Whether perspective was achieved with the art of *trompe-l'oeil* on a single canvas backdrop, or a series of scenes constructed with bordering plants, the representation, the whole intention and the effect was to create an illusion of grandeur.

### The flora

The Melbourne City Council nursery produced the large quantity and variety of plants required for the displays. The production process and the Fitzroy Gardens Conservatory ensured that plants were readily available for

Historical subject  
Interior Melbourne Town Hall  
– Coronation Ball 1953





Above:  
Classical and local icons,  
Lord Mayor's Ball 1956

scheduled and unscheduled civic occasions demanding floral decoration. Labour, apparently, was not a problem. Azalea flower buds would be judiciously nurtured in the Conservatory before 'show-time', and later the bud caps would be picked off by hand to burst just in time for the event.

The floral composition largely depended on what was seasonally available, and the design would generally consist of several layers: background, middle, and foreground. Often, the live plants were placed in a way to blur the distinction between the painted flora in the mural and the living material, so that the depth and breadth of the perspective was heightened to achieve a greater dramatic effect.

The background consisted of mature trees in large pots. Raising these onto a specially constructed platform enhanced their effect, which was sometimes further exaggerated by heaving them even higher onto stacked drums. The characteristics of each specimen were carefully considered: red leaves of the Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*) and red maple (*Acer rubrum*); golden yellow autumn leaves on long pendulous branches of the weeping cut-leaf silver birch (*Betula pendula*

'Youngii'); bright yellow-green flowers on bare branches of the tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*); giant fronds of the indigenous soft tree fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*); and flickering green-silver leaves of the erectly poised Lombardy poplar (*Populus nigra* 'Italica'). Whether the trees were arranged in rows, groupings or as statements, their scale and individual character contributed significantly to the overall design.

The middle ground of the vast stage was filled with colour and mass. Large numbers of shrubs and dwarf trees unified the design by creating a progression from the tall background trees to the lower floriferous foreground. The plants selected for the middle layer performed an array of functions and effects. They included 'green' shrub fillers such as Japanese aucuba (*Aucuba japonica*); the graceful shape of aralia (*Dizygotheca elegantissima*); vivid colour sprays of rhododendron; contrasting foliage of the strappy dracaena (*Dracaena marginata*) or cordyline (*Cordyline australis*); colour foliage forms of flax cultivars (*Phormium tenax*); and the bold flower forms of hydrangeas (*Hydrangea macrophylla*).

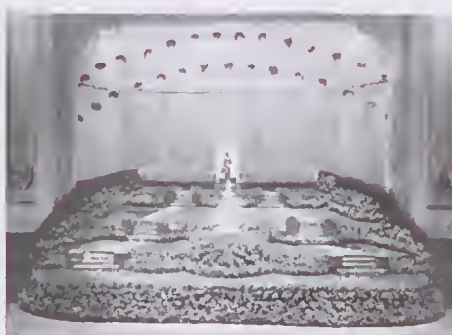
The foreground flora was the most prominent, seasonal flowers and foliage producing the brilliant colour that greeted guests. Thousands of 'pots of colour' were used to craft borders, garden beds, rockeries and hanging baskets. Massing and repeat patterning accentuated the qualities of each plant species: towering slender flower stems of foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*); densely rich-coloured bunches of tricolor chrysanthemum (*Ismelia carinata*); variegated foliage of spider plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*); and the quaint effervescence of lady's slipper (*Calceolaria* sp.).

Sprays of luxuriant colour, an assortment of contrasting shapes, tempting textures, and fresh fragrances – the vegetation may well

Below:  
Royal theme,  
Lord Mayor's Ball 1936

Middle:  
Floral composition,  
Lord Mayor's Ball 1950

Right:  
Australian States,  
Lord Mayors' Ball 1951





have been short-lived, but the effect was everlasting.

## The horticulturist

John Thomas – 'JT' – Smith, Curator of Parks and Gardens from 1921 to 1943, advanced the floral decorative tradition within the Melbourne City Council. His technique to create uniformity of appearance was decisive in the horticultural embroidery of the city – specimen trees, brightly coloured flowerbeds and spacious lawns. He expanded the nursery's production facilities so that it could meet the requirements of the Town Hall and parks and gardens all-year round, and he was a leading proponent of establishing the Fitzroy Gardens Conservatory, motivated by his ardent belief that it would serve for the 'public good'. Smith was well versed in the European tradition, having trained and worked on British estate gardens and, as an accomplished horticulturist, he took over the floral decorations for the Town Hall's civic events from private contractors.

The horticulturists worked alongside the City Architect's Department to bring together overall Town Hall displays. The City Architect was responsible for the design and construction of the stage settings, and various council tradesmen including stonemasons, carpenters, and illustrators built the sets. Melbourne-based theatre artists, such as the eminent W.R Coleman and Rupert Brown, painted the scenic backdrops.

Subsequent directors maintained Smith's high standard. Traditionally, the directors worked up through the ranks, beginning on the ground as gardeners, in the nursery, and then on to manager, superintendent, and finally director – all achieved over a twenty to thirty year period. Thus the horticultural skill, knowledge, and artistry would be shared and imparted from one generation to the next. However, by the 1970s the scale and detail of the stage settings



Above:  
'Sunken Garden'  
Lord Mayors of Australian  
Capital Cities Luncheon 1960

had diminished to a point where only horticultural decorations were used. The last Lord Mayor's Dinner was held at the Town Hall in 1980. By then Australia's public culture had shifted and extravagant civic ceremonies looked out of time and place.

## Acknowledgements

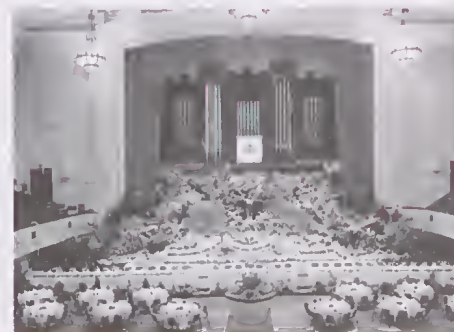
The author expresses her gratitude for the support and direction provided by Eddie Butler-Bowdon, Program Manager, Art & Heritage Collection, City of Melbourne; Nadine Gaffney, Jane Barlow and Nigel Higgins of the City of Melbourne, and Peter Harrison (former director of the city's parks and gardens). Georgina Whitehead, Dr Juliette Peers, Dr Anita Calloway and Dr Mimi Colligan are also thanked for their assistance.

*Jela Ivankovic-Waters is a Bumley-trained, Melbourne landscape gardener and designer with wider interests in the arts. She has undertaken residential, commercial and community-based commissions. She takes an active interest in local garden history, design and culture and was the curator of the recent exhibition Illusions of Grandeur for the City of Melbourne.*

Left:  
Olympic rings and  
Melbourne panorama,  
Olympic Civic Committee  
Ball 1956

Middle:  
Another royal theme,  
Lord Mayor's Dinner 1961

Below:  
The last Lord Mayor's  
Dinner 1980







Suzanne Hunt

# Speaking with Suzanne Hunt

NINA CRONE SPEAKS TO SUZANNE HUNT WHO HAS MASTER-MINDED *GARDENESQUE*, A LIVELY, INFORMATIVE AND HUMOROUS EXHIBITION TRACING THE HISTORY OF GARDENING IN AUSTRALIA.

**NAC:** Suzanne, *Gardenesque*, the forthcoming exhibition at the State Library of Victoria celebrates the 150th anniversary of that institution and marks the 25th anniversary of the Australian Garden History Society but what purpose did you have in mind when you mooted the idea?

**SH:** I had several ideas. The exhibition will show the public what material the Library holds in its garden history collection and I hope it will encourage people to donate further material to that collection. Equally importantly it follows up the publication of the *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*, a great reference resource for those involved in historical research and professional endeavour and it will also introduce the idea of garden history to a wider public.

**NAC:** This exhibition is a notable milestone in your considerable contribution to the development and acceptance of garden history as a worthy subject for academic study. Take us along the early stages on that road.

**SH:** Interest in cultural history began with my work as a social historian at the Museum of Victoria. At that time – during the late 1980s –

we began to collect everything and anything to do with European culture. The Museum had vast collections of Aboriginal artifacts and natural history and science-based collections but had never actively sought ‘everyday life’ objects that told the story of European settlement. I was very lucky to be involved at the start. But it was also a frustrating time because people used to donate material to the Museum freely but with the advent of wealthy private collectors like Lord McAlpine paying exorbitant prices for ‘make do’ furniture and Australian ephemera the public suddenly saw a value attached to such things, so it became much harder to get things donated. Elizabeth Willis and I had *carte blanche* in terms of what to collect. I started the Childhood Collection and the Rural Collection and curated the extensive Mental Health Collection. But unfortunately garden items were not even thought of at that stage.

**NAC:** You then took an active part in the Victorian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society and initiated the garden archive project within the State Library of Victoria.

**SH:** With my background I felt that it was necessary to have a garden history archive if anyone was to take garden history seriously – the history of gardening was still viewed as a touchy-feely area of history. And I realized that until universities could be convinced that it was a worthwhile area of historical endeavor little progress would be made. So the establishment of the garden history archive was imperative and I did much talking to lots of heads of departments. In a very short time students were doing MAs, PhDs, honours theses on aspects of garden history and that was terrific.

Gathering material from the Garden History Archive at the State Library of Victoria (from left) Olga Tsara, Suzanne Hunt and Richard Aitken.





Since then of course Paul Fox has published his book *Clearings* but others too are becoming interested in publishing. The only route for publishing garden history for a long time was through the Australian Garden History Society journal and if anyone wanted information that was where they were directed.

**NAC:** So you wanted a permanent, secure site for the garden history archive?

**SH:** Indeed, and I felt that once the archive was up and running, we needed to display what the State Library had. The whole feeling behind it was to encourage people to delve into the areas of garden history, to encourage the State Library to see it as a major area of collecting. The Garden History Archive was established in 1999. I worked with Olga Tsara for a year and a bit, having a number of meetings with people, putting up proposals and finally my ideas were accepted but unfortunately I became ill so I couldn't personally do the work needed to curate the exhibition I had in mind. I began looking around and thought 'Richard Aitken's got all the skills and energy!' and I asked him if he'd do it and he said he would. I was thrilled to bits – this was after the *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* came out so he obviously had a wonderful overview of garden history right across Australia and he knew all the links. So that was great. And then we did not have enough money so I went out rattling the tin...

**NAC:** From a preview of the material in the exhibition and the catalogue/ book which will accompany it, I have the impression that Richard has had a joyous romp in the garden so to speak.

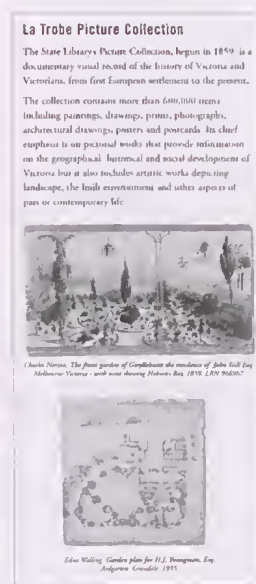
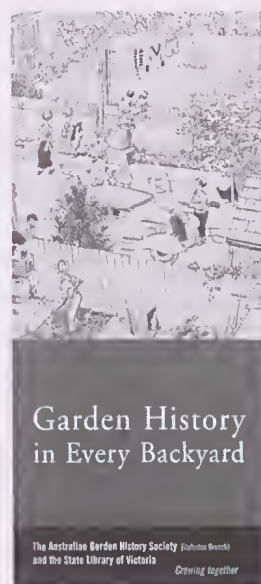
**SH:** He has. Yes, he has. He is a great populariser of the *Oxford Companion* and *Gardenesque*, although a huge academic challenge, has I think been enjoyed by him. Richard has shown me bits of the book as he went along and talked about his ideas and mine – and I have been grateful to be included. In the beginning I was a little bit concerned that it was going to be too academic. I knew this exhibition had to appeal to everyone especially to everyday gardeners – people who grew dahlias out at Mulgrave for example – so they would feel comfortable to come into the State Library and just enjoy the day there...but they would

also come out with something memorable and relevant to their aspirations and understanding of gardens. The exhibition also had to be more than displaying books and other paper ephemera. People tend to just whiz past books, I know I often do. There needs to be the odd 3-dimensional object on display.

**NAC:** And perhaps something to take home?

**SH:** Exactly. The great thrill for me was the fact that Melbourne University Publishing, under its Miegunyah imprint, heard about the project and actually contacted Richard and said they would like to publish the material. The book *Gardenesque* is not only a catalogue to the exhibition, for me it is the *raison d'être* for the exhibition as it will act as a guide back into the archive collection at the State Library and that's really what I stipulated – that it had to be that...

*Suzanne Hunt has been responsible for many activities initiated by the Victorian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society. She organized the seminars 'From Gaiters to Gumboots' and 'With Seeds in their Pockets', she wrote the chapter on school gardens in Planting the Nation and contributed to the Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens.*



*Gardenesque* opens at the State Library of Victoria on Friday, 8 October and will run until February 2005. Admission is free. The exhibition and the associated book *Gardenesque: A Celebration of Australian Gardening* by Richard Aitken will be reviewed in the next issue of this journal.







# Mailbox

**Stuart Read**, Heritage Officer and Landscape Specialist at the NSW Heritage Office writes 'I greatly enjoyed the Dulwich House article in the May/June AGH (hey, interwar 20th century gardens, here we come at last!).

Some botanical suggestions on a couple of details: Page 10 photo of the Dulwich House rose garden 1942 shows four mature gum trees and a conifer as backdrop to the roses, and it seems to me that conifer is a classic Himalayan cedar, *Cedrus deodara*, and not a Bhutan cypress, *Cupressus torulosa* quoted as 'planted in lawn on the north-eastern side... forms an impressive backdrop for the... fountain.' I may be wrong, but if that tree in the photo is the one meant, it isn't a Bhutan cypress.

Also the kaffir-apple hedge (*Aberia caffra*) is more likely to be a kei apple hedge, *Dovyalis caffra*, from South Africa and a common 19th century hedge – even in SE Queensland – I spotted a huge *Dovyalis caffra* on the pre-conference Darling Downs tour before the Brisbane conference in 2003.'

**Charlie Hohnen** comments 'Ernest Lord's 'Shrubs and Trees for Australian Gardens' in the 1970 edition gives *Aberia caffra* as a synonym for *Dovyalis caffra*. *Dovyalis caffra* occurs in cultivation and/or naturalised in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland and by this account in South Australia as well.'



**Marigold Curtis** writes '...a delight to read of Burnley College. I did a Discovering Horticulture (short) course there 20-odd years ago under Greg Moore, the late Hank Swaan, John Patrick and other enthusiastic lecturers... Still have my notes.'

Marigold is now an indefatigable member of the Friends of Warnambool Botanic Gardens and is excited about the increased plantings of araucarias being established in the Gardens,



## Letters from 'Mrs Rolf Boldrewood' to Ellen Foreman

The tour, led by Trisha Dixon, that follows the Annual National Conference will visit Ellensville and Denholm Court, home of 'Mrs Rolf Boldrewood' author of *The Flower Garden in Australia*, published in 1893.

Pacita Alexander, who lives at Ellensville, writes of letters from 'Mrs Rolf Boldrewood' to Ellen Foreman. Tucked away on a bookshelf at Ellensville is a blue book with gold lettering, called *Swiss Letters*.

Ellen Foreman  
From her affectionate god-child  
Margaret Browne

The first letter in the collection of about forty that has survived at Ellensville was written in 1851. The fourteen-year-old Margaret writes:

'How is my dear Ellen this morning....'Oh and Ellen all the late peaches are ripe now. Cartloads rotting on the ground so if you wish for any to preserve you had better come immediately.'

The story of this collection of letters, by Pacita Alexander, will be featured in the next issue of the journal.

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# For the Bookshelf

## RESURRECTION IN A BUCKET

by Margaret Simons  
Allen & Unwin  
ISBN 186508588X  
RRP \$24.95 paperback

*Reviewed by Murray Hohnen*

Margaret Simons has piled together an interesting, entertaining and educative miscellany that should appeal to urban compost voyeurs and mystics. It is not a book about how to make a good compost heap and avoids diagrams and step-by-step guidance that might have been worthwhile for the practically oriented. Nor is it an ordered tale - little gems are interspersed with bulk and roughage - much like a compost heap blending all sorts of bits and pieces into a nourishing loam.

The book takes the rhythm and cycle of life as the starting point for a series of chapters recounting the early pioneers of compost, organic processes, biodynamics and permaculture. The author records their gradual progress from marginal obscurity and perceived eccentricity into the sunlight of acceptance and global implementation. The doughty champions of compost include Sir Albert Howard who learnt from barefoot professors in India, Lady Eve Balfour in England and J I Rodale in the United States. In the words of Sir Albert 'All that is needed to raise crop production to a much higher level throughout the world is the orderly utilisation of the waste products of

agriculture itself'. Perhaps today we would add to that 'and human wastes and discards as well'. The chapter titled 'Humility and humus - confronting humanure' presents some challenging issues to be dealt with by both urban and rural users of the soil.

The second half of the book discusses compost's slow but steady spread to the global mainstream. Recycling and organic transformation are embraced as the developed world searches for ways to convert the ecological liabilities inherent in today's throw-away society into opportunities for restoring fertility to the soil and bringing bumper crops to feed expanding populations. There are some timely, harder edged suggestions on the progress of recycling in Australia and how it might be accelerated.

But the real heroes of the book are the millions of unpaid worms and 'invisible, silent and minute soil inhabitants, which nature has chosen to dispose in the first few inches of decaying wastes strewn over the surface of the globe' committing their lives and palates to the task of undoing some of the damage that supposedly smarter beings create.

*Murray Hohnen discovered an interest in compost many years ago and constructed the 'heritage' compost bins at Bishops court, modelled on the compost bins at Raheen.*



## ACT WINTER SEMINAR

During the ACT Branch Winter Seminar held at Huskisson, participants visited the grounds of HMAS Cresswell, the ACT's early 20th century 'port'. Other visits included the Booderee Botanic Gardens, with the Aboriginal curator, the garden of Meroogal at Nowra and the garden of Arthur Boyd at Bundanon.

Photo: Courtesy Mox Bourke





# Items of Interest

## NATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

The 24th Annual General Meeting of the Australian Garden History Society will be held in Sydney in the Domain Theatre, Art Gallery of NSW on Saturday 16 October 2004 at 8.30am. Items to be included on the agenda should be posted to the AGHS office.

There will be six vacancies on the National Management Committee this year. If the nominations exceed the number of vacancies, ballot papers will be enclosed in this journal.

## GARDENS OF MEMORY PROJECT

Colleen Morris, Chair of the National Management Committee of AGHS, is the coordinator of the Gardens of Memory Project which she described on the Radio National program 'The Comfort Zone' last month. The aim of the project is to document gardens in a more detailed way than local heritage studies and there has already been a most encouraging response.

'We would like to find out what your garden, or a garden that was important to you, was like when you were growing up' Colleen said. 'In this way we will be able to capture a snapshot of gardens and how they were used and planted during much of the twentieth century'.

People interested in participating should provide a sketch plan of the garden, [either A3 or A4 size], together with a plant list and a description of the garden. The description can be as brief as you wish, or it can be a longer description with captioned photographs attached and the full address of the site. As the plans and information will not be returned participants may wish to keep a photocopy of the material submitted for their own record.

Further information can be obtained by from the AGHS Office, Gate Lodge, 100 Birdwood Avenue, Melbourne 3004.

## FELLOWSHIPS TO AGHS WRITERS

The State Library of Victoria has granted a nine-month fellowship to Paul Fox, author of *Clearings* and a three-month fellowship to Richard Aitken, co-editor of *The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* and author of *Gardenesque* the forthcoming book to accompany the exhibition of the same name which will open in October at the State Library of Victoria. Well deserved congratulations to Paul and Richard.

## THE ACCOLADES CONTINUE

AGHS publications attracted favourable comment in the *Historic Gardens Review* published by the Historic Gardens Foundation in London. In the March issue Kerry Yates, reviewing *Planting the Nation*, wrote "Amateur gardening is wonderfully brought to life. The chapter by Suzanne Hunt on school gardens in Victoria is particularly interesting . . . Editor Georgina Whitehead's 'Afterword' sums up a splendid book; and it is a further compliment to the depth and quality of Australian gardening that the country is the first to be accorded its own 'Oxford Comp' [*Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens*]."

For those who have recently joined AGHS, copies of these publications can still be ordered from Jackie Courmadias or via the website.

## THANKS

Thanks to our ever-cheerful and industrious packing team who for the July/August journal were Jane Bunney, Di Ellerton, Mal and Fran Faul, Jane Johnson, Laura Lewis, Ann Miller, Helen Page, Sandra Torpey and Elizabeth Wright.



# Diary Dates

## Until October 3

### Melbourne – Exhibition

John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque at the National Gallery of Victoria, Federation Square.

## SEPTEMBER

### Saturday 4\*

#### Sydney and Northern NSW

10am-3pm at All Saints Church Hall, Stanmore Rd, Petersham. Gardening in the Inner West, a seminar on Marrickville's gardening history. Learn about indigenous use of landscape, gardens of grand Victorian villas, late 19th century plant nurseries, Marrickville Horticultural Society, and contemporary backyard gardening by 'new Australians'. Display of archival horticultural material. Plant identification. Morning and afternoon tea. A joint function with Marrickville Heritage Society and Marrickville Council. Cost: \$40, (Members & Concessions \$35). Bookings essential. Enquiries: Peter Cousens (02) 9550 3809.

### Thursday 8

#### Burnside, South Australia

AGM and Dinner. Guest Speaker: Colleen Morris – Gardens of Memory. Contact: Lyn Hillier (08) 8338 7048, Bookings essential. Cost \$35 per person for dinner.

### Friday 10

#### Sydney, Knox Garden Day

Billyard & Water Sts, Wahroonga. Open gardens and stalls. For further information contact Christine Buchan Ford (02) 9449 1218.

### Sunday 12\*

#### Western Australia, Perth

Talk: The utilisation of local plants by the early settlers. Contact: Edith Young through Young\_ee47@hotmail.com or John Viska (08) 9328 1515.

### Wednesday 15\*

#### Victoria, Melbourne

Working Bee at Bishops court. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

### Monday 20\*

#### Victoria, Melbourne

8pm at Mueller Hall, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra. Lecture: Dry Stone Walls – Public Art in the Landscape by Raelene Marshall of the Dry Stone Wall Association. Cost: \$18 (AGHS members \$14). Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

### Saturday 25\*

#### Victoria, Bulla

Working Bee at Glenara (Melways 177 C9). Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

## OCTOBER

### Saturday 2\*

#### Victoria, the Dandenongs

Bus Trip: Walling Wonders in the Dandenongs. Visits to five Walling gardens. Cost: \$83 (AGHS members \$72). Booking form available. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260 or helenpage@bigpond.com

### Saturday 9 10am to 4pm

#### Sunday 10 10am to 3pm

#### Growing Friends Spring Plant Sale

Royal Botanic Gardens, South Yarra Inside E Gate off Birdwood Avenue Melway 2LC2. Enquiries 9818 6012

### Friday 15-Sunday 17\*

#### Domain Theatre, Art Gallery of New South Wales

25th Annual National Conference – Browne Off: Old Gardens in a New World

### Monday 18\*

Optional Day of Visits: Gardens of Sydney's Northern Beaches \$110

### Tuesday 19-Thursday 21\*

Post-Conference Tour: Historic homes and gardens in the Cow Pasture and Appin areas, south of Sydney.

### Wednesday 20\*

#### Victoria, Melbourne

Working Bee at Bishops court. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

### Saturday 23\*

#### Victoria, Daylesford

Working Bee at Wombat Park (Vicroads 59 7D). Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

### Sunday 24\*

#### Western Australia, Mandurah

Visit to Mandurah. Contact: Edith Young through Young\_ee47@hotmail.com or John Viska (08) 9328 1515.

### Saturday 23-Sunday 24

#### Victoria, Benalla

Benalla Botanica Conference 'Community Spaces and Private Places – planting for your environment'. Contact: Jane Grimwade (03) 5762 2792.

### Friday 29-Tuesday 2 November\*

#### Victoria, The Grampians

With Rodger & Gwen Elliot – a 5 day Bus Trip. Booking form available. Contact: Sue Keon-Cohen (03) 5944 3971 or info@emilyhillfarm.com.au

## NOVEMBER

### Wednesday 17\*

#### Victoria, Melbourne

Working Bee at Bishops court. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

### Saturday 27\*

#### Victoria, Beaufort

Working Bee at Belmont (Vicroads 57 G7). Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

## DECEMBER

### Sunday 5\*

#### Western Australia, Perth

Christmas Function at Tranby House. Contact: Edith Young through Young\_ee47@hotmail.com or John Viska (08) 9328 1515.

### Wednesday 8\*

#### Victoria, Melbourne

Christmas Walk, Talk and BYO Picnic in Edinburgh Gardens, North Fitzroy (Melways 44 B1). Contact: Lorraine Nadenbaum (03) 9429 4855.

### Wednesday 15\*

#### Victoria, Melbourne

Working Bee at Bishops court. Contact: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260.

\* indicates an activity organized by AGHS





# *‘A place of simple purpose and frequent paradox’*

**V**ivien Dwyer is a garden artist and keen gardener who lives at Singleton in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales. Her first venture into book publication is a personal response to Duntroon, described by General Peter Cosgrove as ‘a place of simple purpose and frequent paradox’.

Artists are interwoven with the history of Duntroon. Sophia, wife of Robert Campbell who established the property, was the first-known woman artist in Australia. She painted charming scenes of colonial society. In 1854 Robert Campbell’s youngest son George moved to Duntroon with his artist wife Marianne Collinson-Close. Born in Morpeth in the Hunter Valley Marianne had attended painting classes given by Conrad Martens. While living at Duntroon she recorded the local flora and landscape before the settlement of Canberra.

In *Duntroon: An Artist’s Impression* Vivien captures the natural and historic beauty of an important part of Australia’s National Estate and records army officer training in the twenty-first century – an unusual pairing.

Vivien Dwyer’s account traces the pattern of seasons, natural and occupational, through a year. Using words and sketches from her personal diary of visits to Duntroon over five years she relates her impressions of life at the Royal Military College against the wider backdrop of world events – the independence of East Timor, the 9/11 attacks, war in Afghanistan, the Bali bombings and combat in Iraq. In doing so she also provides a sensitive history of Duntroon. Her account makes thought provoking reading.

Further information and order forms for *Duntroon: An Artist’s Impression* can be found on [www.lonsdalegallerypress.com.au](http://www.lonsdalegallerypress.com.au) or by phoning The Lonsdale Gallery Press (02) 6572 1020.

Nina Crone

## **DUNTROON:** *An Artist’s Impression*



Cadets assemble outside  
Duntroon House

Front verandah Duntroon House

Campbell Rose Garden and  
Conservatory

Graduation Celebrations

